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ABSTRACT

The basic concern of this paper is to identify those demographic, occupational, and organizational variables that might differentiate between those professions that have higher levels of attitudinal militancy from those that exhibit less militancy. Semantic differential attitudinal data was collected from 414 teachers in two school districts and 482 nurses employed in three hospitals. Analysis indicated that attitudinal militancy is a generalized phenomenon across differing professions with organizationally based concerns, particularly frustrated career aspirations, as central differentiating factors. (Author)

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DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDINAL MILITANCY AMONG NURSES AND TEACHERS

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INTRODUCTION

The past few years have been characterized by the widespread and rapid growth of public employee unions. In numbers faintly reminiscent to the 1930's when blue-collar workers stood in line to join the CIO Unions, teachers, nurses, social workers, and other white-collar groups employed in governmental agencies have flocked to the collective bargaining banner. This rapid growth has lead one observer to predict that by 1975 more than 80 percent of the nation's public school teachers will be covered by collective bargaining activities; and it should be remembered that this is a group which until ten short years ago was thought to be strongly opposed to militant collective action.[1] The direction has so sharply turned that strikes have been reported by teachers,[2] nurses,[3] doctors,[4] and social workers.[5] Such actions appear to be clear departures from the past practices involving these occupational groups. By tradition, these groups have relied upon individual efforts to secure their occupational objectives, and collective activities have been largely passive or directed toward political lobbying.

Why the change in both attitude and action on the part of these occupational groups? There seem to be many reasons. The changing pattern of societal values which legitimate direct confrontation activities in the pursuit of occupational objectives

may be one factor.[6] The changing character of the occupational work force (i.e., increasing numbers of younger males and/or minority group members in the population) may be another.[7] The well-publicized success of the early collective bargaining activities by fellow occupational group members may be yet another factor. Or, the spectacular success of the militant actions taken by certain blue-collar unions, particularly in the construction and transportation industries, may have spurred the desire among those groups whose wages have traditionally lagged behind to secure for themselves a "fair share" of the economic pie. These factors undoubtedly contribute to the emergence of militant action on the part of these professional and non-professional employee groups. Yet, while these trends characterize many occupational groups, certain groups seem to be more militant than others in the pursuit of occupational objectives. Teachers, for instance, seem to be more widely organized for collective action than nurses. Even within occupational groupings, there are wide variations in militancy, with those particularly in the urban areas displaying higher levels of militant behavior. It is the thesis of this article that these intra- and inter-group variations in militant thought and deed may be associated with factors indigenous to both the given professional structure and the employing institution.

The material which follows is based on a questionnaire survey of two helping professions--nurses and teachers--who have been characterized by increasing participation in and reliance on militant activities. Since the survey was performed in a single

geographic region with a limited sample examining a limited range of variables, this article should not be considered as a comprehensive research report. Rather, it is intended to examine one possible sub-set of explanatory factors related to inter- and intra-group variations in attitudinal militancy. Furthermore, the survey collected primarily attitudinal data. While recognizing the clear distinction between attitudinal predispositions and actual behavior, we assume that militant attitudes are linked in some imperfect way with militant action.

RATIONALE AND RESEARCH FOCUS

The occupational structure of the United States has been strongly influenced by two often contradictory trends. On the one hand, there has been the growth and proliferation, both in absolute numbers and their strategic societal location, of a large number of occupational groups clamoring to be recognized as professionals.[8] On the other hand, given the development of a more service-oriented economy and the assumption of sweeping new social responsibilities by both government and business, many of these emergent and rapidly-growing occupations have been attached to large-scale bureaucratic organizations.[9] As a result, large numbers of individuals have come to share the "autonomous-independent" orientations of the traditional professional while also existing in the "subordinate-dependent" organizational setting usually occupied by non-professional employees. To some extent the militant collective actions employed by some groups

may be an outgrowth of the generalized tension attributable to this clash between professional ideals and organizational reality.

In addition, a number of organizationally specific factors may account for the increased level of militancy found among many professional and quasi-professional groups. As has been indicated, employment in large-scale organizations often places limitations on professional autonomy, and this results in the loss of control over conditions of professional practice.[10] It should also be noted that limitations on professional autonomy often emerge when decision-making is controlled by non-professionals[11] and that employment in large-scale bureaucratic institutions sharply modifies professional career progressions. Rather than simply being oriented to career advancement through systems controlled by professional colleagues, in a large number of occupations career advancement becomes a matter of progressing through hierarchies of employment systems in which control is shared with or dominated by non-professionals.[12]

Put another way, general organizational characteristics of institutions employing professionals may account for modifications in degrees of professional militancy.[13] These endogenous organizational factors may produce two different patterns. First, since each professional occupational group is employed in different types of organizational structures (e.g., hospitals are structured differently than schools), it may be inferred that professional groups will vary from each other in attitudinal militancy. For example, teachers may have different militancy predispositions than nurses because their employing organizations are so different.

Secondly, at the micro-organizational level, within each profession differences among particular employing organizations may result in different levels of attitudinal militancy. That is to say, teachers employed in different school districts may vary in intensity of militancy due to differing characteristics of each district, and nurses employed in different hospitals may exhibit varying levels of attitudinal militancy.

The basic concern of this paper is to identify through both analysis of variance and multiple regression analysis those characteristics which are associated with attitudinal militancy. Specifically, a wide range of demographic, occupational and organizational variables were examined which might differentiate between those professions who have higher levels of attitudinal militancy from those who exhibit less militancy. Three specific research questions were examined in this study: (1) Does the specific nature of individual occupations account for differing levels of attitudinal militancy? Phrased somewhat differently, is it true that members of the differing professions are relatively homogenous in attitudinal orientation? (2) Do factors endogenous to given employing systems distinguish between levels of attitudinal militancy? That is to say, within given professions are differences in attitudinal militancy associated with variations in employing institutions; and (3) To what extent do specific personal demographic characteristics of professionals serve to explain variations in attitudinal militancy? In other words, regardless of differences in professions or employing systems what characteristics of the individual professional serve to best predict attitudes towards militant activities?

METHODOLOGY

Participating in the questionnaire survey conducted for this research were 414 teachers employed in two separate school districts (one rural and one small city urban) and 482 registered professional nurses employed in three hospitals (religious, county and community), all research sites being located in Western New York. Sampling procedures resulted in the participation of 70 percent of all teachers employed in both districts and 80 percent of the nursing personnel employed in each hospital, thereby insuring representation of professional personnel from all organizational levels and professional specialties. Comparisons of the distributions of demographic characteristics among participants and non-participants revealed no significant differences.

For analysis purposes information concerning each subject's profession, employing organization, age, sex, seniority and marital status was taken directly from completed questionnaires. Each of the variables discussed below required the computation of separate indices or scores based on the responses of each subject. Regardless of profession, subjects responded to the same questions. This was essential for analysis purposes.

In this paper "attitudinal militancy" refers to subject evaluations of Strikes, Collective Bargaining, Unions for Professionals and Professional Associations. Individuals evaluated each of these objects by responding to seven point semantic differential scales which measured the degree to which subjects viewed strikes, unions, collective bargaining and professional associations with favor or disfavor. Subject scores could range

from 1, very unfavorable, through 7, very favorable. It was assumed that the more militant the attitudes of professionals the more favorably would they evaluate strikes, unions and collective bargaining, and the less favorably, or at least more uncertain, would they evaluate their traditionally less forceful professional associations.

Two measures of personality characteristics were used. The first, authoritarianism, measured each subject's reaction to authority and involved use of a shortened thirteen-item version of the California F-scale.[14] The second personality characteristic, interpersonal trust, was measured by having subjects respond to a six-question scale. The scale measured the degree to which each individual viewed his social world as either friendly, supportive and predictable or hostile, demanding and unpredictable.[15]

It was felt that one important variable might be the extent to which professionals were dissatisfied with the actions or attributes they felt were necessary for career advancement. Subjects were presented with a list of thirty-five attributes which might be necessary for career advancement (e.g., having spouse liked by your superior, knowing the right people, improving technical skills, getting along well with others, etc.). They responded to these thirty-five attributes twice, indicating on a five-point scale how important they believed each item was currently and how important they felt it should be. The degree of career dissatisfaction was computed by summing over the absolute difference between the current and preferred responses for each of the thirty-five attributes.

The question of how committed an individual is to his profession and employing organization has been shown to be a central factor in determining attitudes.[16] Consequently, an index of commitment was constructed for each subject based on summed over responses to whether or not he would leave his current profession (professional commitment) or employing system (organizational commitment) if offered inducements such as:

a slight increase in pay
a slight increase in status
slightly greater creativity
slightly friendlier colleagues

Thus, for each subject we had one score for commitment to profession and a separate score representing commitment to present employing organization.

Two additional variables were used in this research. The first, felt job tension, was measured through use of a scale developed and reported by Kahn, et al., and served as an indicator of how much job-related anxiety or pressure was being experienced by subjects.[17] Finally, in order to determine the degree of perceived role conflict, subjects were presented with a list of ten role activities common to their profession. Every subject then indicated the percentage of his total job time he currently devoted to each activity and the percentage of work time he preferred to allocate to each activity. By summing over the discrepancies between current and preferred job time allocations, we were able to derive a single comparable index of role conflict for each subject.

FINDINGS

It is clear from data presented in Table 1 that the nature of occupation is a significant factor differentiating levels of attitudinal militancy. The data shows that there exist rather distinct differences between teachers and nurses concerning attitudinal militancy. Teachers tended to view collective bargaining ($\bar{X}$ = 5.04) and professional associations ($\bar{X}$ = 5.18) much more positively than nurses ($\bar{X}$ = 2.68 and 2.23, respectively). On the other hand, nurses viewed strikes by professionals and unions for professionals less negatively than did school teachers. The favorable evaluation of professional associations by the teachers and the correspondingly less unfavorable rating of unions by nurses may be explicable in light of the past ineffectiveness of the American Nurses Association's attempts to pursue matters of collective bargaining and the current past activism of many National Education Associations affiliated district level professional teachers' associations.[13] In any event, the first research question is answered in the positive; i.e., specific professional factors do differentiate levels of attitudinal militancy.

Data presented in Table 2 focuses on the second research question of whether or not attitudinal militancy is affected by a particular employment system. For teachers, employing district apparently serves as a good differentiator of attitudinal militancy. Teachers employed in the urban district in our study were consistently less militant than those subjects teaching in the rural district. Subsequent interview activities confirmed this

finding. In terms of attitudes toward strikes and unions, employment organization also appeared to be related to the attitudinal militancy of professional nurses. It should be noted, however, that in respect to attitudes toward collective bargaining and professional associations, nurses in our study were relatively homogeneous; i.e., no attitudinal differences appeared across employing organizations. Thus, nurses are consistently negative in evaluating both collective bargaining and their professional associations, regardless of particular institutional affiliations. On balance, though, the second research question is also answered in the affirmative.

The third research question dealt with the impact of specific demographic variables on attitudinal militancy. Table 3 reports results of analysis based on sex and marital status for all nine hundred subjects. Apparently marital status does not serve as an effective discriminator of attitudinal militancy. A similar conclusion holds for a consideration of sex and attitudes toward strikes and unions for professionals. There is, however, a great difference in the attitudes of males and females toward collective bargaining and professional associations. Males view collective bargaining and professional associations far more favorably than females, regardless of occupational designation.

In an effort to develop a more parsimonious predictive model, multiple regression analysis was employed, using the four attitudinal militancy dimensions as separate dependent variables and personal and organizational factors as independent variables. In this manner, four sets of multiple regression equations were

generated. Age was the single best predictor of attitudinal militancy, accounting for as much as 31 percent of the variance in the attitudes toward professional associations. Age was positively correlated with evaluations of collective bargaining (accounting for 21.7 percent of the variance), and professional associations (accounting for 31 percent of the variance), and negatively correlated with evaluations of strikes (accounting for 16.2 percent of the variance and attitudes toward unions, accounting for 2.7 percent of the variance). Apparently younger professionals more favorably evaluate strikes and unions, while older professionals more favorably evaluate collective bargaining activities through traditional professional associations. Furthermore, age accounted for substantially more of the variation of attitudes toward collective bargaining and professional associations than toward strikes and unions, indicating that other factors intervene in the relationship between age and the attitudes toward the more militant activities of joining unions and striking.

Career dissatisfaction appears as another significant contributor to the prediction of attitudinal militancy, showing up in three of the four sets of equations. Interestingly, the greater the career dissatisfaction of professionals the more positive the attitudes toward professional associations and the more negative the evaluation of strikes and unions. Thus, it would appear that as these older shorter-service professionals become disenchanted with their current career development they look to their professional associations and not unions for relief.

Length of service with the institution (seniority) is another variable which contributed significantly to the regression equation in all four sets. Despite its presumed close identity to age, in three of the four equation sets, seniority and age have opposite effects. This indicates that older, but shorter-service employees, have more favorable attitudes toward collective bargaining and professional associations, while younger, longer-service employees are more favorable toward strikes. Thus, it is either the high mobility professionals (possibly the cosmopolitans) who have the strongest militant attitudes, or it is the professional who is recently returning to the occupation, either from another occupation or from maternity or housekeeping activities, who is more favorable toward collective bargaining activities.

Organizational commitment was another contributor to the explained variance in attitudes toward collective bargaining and professional associations. In both instances, the greater an individual's commitment to his employing organization the more negative his evaluation of collective bargaining and professional associations.

Felt job tensions and inter-personal trust were also significant contributors to more militant attitudes. The greater the degree of job-related tension experienced by subjects, the more positively they evaluated collective bargaining and unions for professionals.

The data reveals a somewhat different profile of the militant professional than prior research may have led us to expect.

Professionals most favorable to collective bargaining are likely to be older, low-seniority employees who are less committed to the employing organization and who experience greater felt job tension. Such persons who also experience career dissatisfaction are likely to turn to the professional association as a vehicle for remedying this employment problem. This identifies the professional who most favors collective bargaining as not necessarily the younger male, but rather more probably the middle-aged female who has recently returned to the profession after child bearing. Furthermore, the prominence of career dissatisfaction in the equations suggests that these older, shorter-service professionals do not find their career satisfactory, and this may contribute to their more militant attitudes. These dissatisfied professionals, however, do not favorably evaluate strikes, thus indicating the limits of their militancy. The low amount of variance explained in terms of attitudes toward unions may reflect the low salience of union activities for these two groups of professionals.

In summary, in terms of percent of explained variance, the personality/demographic characteristics employed as independent variables in this study were relatively uneven predictors of attitudinal militancy, accounting from 5.7 percent to 34.2 percent of attitudinal variance. Furthermore, the predictors employed in our study do a better job of explaining the less militant attitudes toward collective bargaining and professional associations (24 percent and 34 percent) than the more militant concepts of strikes (20 percent) and unions (6 percent). In any event, the data presented in Tables 1 through 3 suggest that the most effective discriminators of attitudinal militancy among

professional employees are: (1) characteristics of the particular professional occupation; and (2) characteristics of the specific employing institutions in which professionals are found. Thus, in order to adequately understand and account for professional attitudes toward militancy, researchers should not assume that professional are homogeneous in attitudinal orientation and might profitably focus their attention on rather trnditional work-site concerns.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The spread of militant collective action by professional employees has posed serious concerns for all employing organizations, state and local legislatures, and society in general. This paper explored personal, organizational and occupational correlates of this attitudinal militancy phenomenon. The data presented in this paper have several interesting implications.

In the first place, our findings indicate that factors indigenous to the specific employing organization are the best predictors of attitudinal militancy. Issues such as job autonomy, participation in decision making, salary and other conditions of professional practice are likely to have major influences over the level of attitudinal militancy which surfaces in any given organization. This is consistent with previously reported data concerning teachers,[19] nurses,[20] and other occupational groups. Concern for participation in decision making, for instance, has been widely cited as contributing to the spread of teacher militancy.[21] In the same vein, denial of job autonomy,

particularly control over matters of professional practice, has been demonstrated to be related to attitudinal militancy for teachers and social workers.[22] This implies that by focusing on the needs and concerns of their specific professional employees, a given employing organization can reduce the level of attitudinal militancy.

One specific organizational factor emerges quite strongly from the analysis of both professional groups studied. Frustration of career advancement aspirations ranked as a major contributor to the emergence of attitudinal militancy. Both professional groups tend to have a flat occupational structure which is located in a tall, multi-level organizational hierarchy. The absence of professional advancement opportunities forces teachers and nurses to leave the profession and advance along the organizational hierarchy into administrative positions. This suggests the need for employing organizations to provide a differentiated professional hierarchy which permits several steps of advancement within the profession. In education the concept of differentiated staffing with the utilization of master teachers and team leaders is an effort to provide a multi-level professional advancement structure. In medicine and recent emergence of the nurse/physician role is a similar attempt to provide multi-level career structures.

In many respects, the situation confronting nurses and teachers closely parallels that which confronted engineers and scientists in the late 1950's. Up until that point the engineering profession had had a flat occupational hierarchy and salary structure which forced ambitious professionals into

non-engineering management positions. The career dissatisfactions expressed by engineers at that time, combined undoubtedly with the threat of emergent unionism, led to the creation of dual salary and advancement ladders which permitted engineers and scientists to advance upward in a professional hierarchy, which paralleled the management hierarchy both in terms of salary and status. Similar organisational inventions may serve to ease career pressures in these two professions.

Secondly, while organizationally specific factors are powerful influences, broad occupational factors also are significant. Our findings suggest that professional groups do vary from each other in their level of attitudinal militancy. Nurses as a group do, in fact, show different attitudes than teachers as a group. Furthermore, these interprofessional group differences exist independent of the similar demographic characteristics of the population. Thus, female teachers have different attitudes than female nurses. This suggests the operation of structural factors which may be traced to either some self-selection factor (e.g., females who enter teaching may be different in some critical attributes than females who enter nursing) or some overlying structural characteristic of the profession. In any event, the clear implication is that the two professions studied cannot be grouped together in matters concerning militant collective action. This suggests that differential statutory procedures are necessary for varying professional groups. The New York State Teachers' Association, for instance, has argued most vehemently that the New York State Taylor Law procedures, which regulate the collective

action of the public employees, is not relevant for the needs of professional teachers. Several states including Oregon, Washington, and Rhode Island have enacted separate legislation for nurses and teachers, differentiating not only between nurses and teachers but also between these two professional groups and other occupations found in the public service. The data in this paper supports this differentiation as a viable public policy alternative.

Thirdly, the relative absence of variation in militant attitudes by demographic considerations suggests that militancy is a pervasive attitude which is widely distributed throughout the professional population. Employing organizations and legislatures who believe that militancy is a phenomenon found only in a few select individuals whose demands therefore can be dismissed are almost certain to be faced with increased difficulties. Our data supports those who argue that changing societal values which legitimatize confrontation and aggressive militant action in the pursuit of group objectives reinforce, sustain, and may even amplify the militant attitudinal predispositions of professionals. Professional employees, reflecting the prevalent value system of society, can probably increasingly be expected to adopt militant collective action.

Lastly, given the heterogenity in most professional populations, this suggests the necessity for further research to isolate those concerns which most relevant to specific sub-stratum in the profession. Prior researchers demonstrated that organizational populations are far from homogeneous in terms of their commitments and their desires for participation in organizational

decision-making. These varigated patterns are of considerable interest, both to the researcher interested in examining the correlates of individual behavior and the practitioner concerned with managing individual behavior toward the attainment of a set of organizational objectives.

In summary, attitudinal militancy is a generalized phenomenon which varies between professions and among employing organizations within a given profession. The most critical elements influencing the level of attitudinal militancy appear to be organizationally based with one of the central organizational concerns revolving around frustrated career aspirations. The necessity for recognizing both the idiosyncratic factors in each given organization and the general structural factors which distinguish between professions, which lead to differential legislative public policy implications, are also apparent.

Table 1

Occupational Differences In
Attitudinal Militancy

Attitudes Toward:	Occupations Teachers	Nurses	F-Value	Sig. Level
Collective Barg.	5.04	2.68	417.6	$<.001$
Strikes by Profs.	2.89	4.82	275.8	$<.001$
Unions for Profs.	3.48	4.25	36.4	$<.001$
Professional Assoc.	5.18	2.23	645.3	$<.001$

1/899 degrees of freedom

Table 2

Employment Systems and
Attitudinal Militancy

I. Teachers

Attitudes Toward:	Districts		F-Value	Sig. Level
	Urban	Rural		
Collective Barg.	4.78	5.37	8.65	<.01
Strikes by Profs.	2.73	3.09	4.02	<.05
Unions for Profess.	3.22	3.81	8.21	<.01
Professional Assoc.	4.86	5.58	10.26	<.01

1/414 degrees of freedom

II. Nurses

Attitudes Toward:	Hospitals			F-Value	Sig. Level
	Religious	County	Community		
Collective Barg.	2.67	2.53	2.88	2.40	ns
Strikes by Profs.	5.16	4.55	4.79	5.92	<.01
Unions for Profs.	4.56	3.96	4.28	5.32	<.01
Professional Assoc.	2.06	2.30	2.33	3.11	ns

2/482 degrees of freedom

Table 3

Marital Status, Sex and
Attitudinal Militancy

I. Sex

Attitudes Toward:	Males	Females	F-Value	Sig. Level
Collective Barg.	5.42	3.51	94.92	< .001
Strikes by Profs.	3.64	3.97	2.33	ns
Unions for Profs.	4.18	3.85	2.97	ns
Professional Assoc.	5.00	3.37	56.01	< .001

Degrees of Freedom (1/899)

II. Marital Status

Attitudes Toward:	Married	Single	Other	F-Value	Sig. Level
Collective Barg.	3.63	3.82	3.83	.80	ns
Strikes by Profs.	3.87	4.03	3.52	2.35	ns
Unions for Profs.	3.93	3.90	3.61	.62	ns
Professional Assoc.	3.33	3.68	3.93	2.91	ns

Degrees of Freedom (2/898)

Table 4*

Personality Determinants of Attitudinal Militancy**

I. Attitudes Toward Collective Bargaining

	Regression Coefficient	Multiple R	Percent of Total Variance Explained
Age	.5656	.465	21.7
Organizational Commitment	-.4915	.480	23.0
Seniority	-.2717	.489	23.9
Job Tension	.1385	.493	24.3

II. Attitudes Toward Strikes by Professionals

Age	-.4572	.402	16.2
Seniority	.3973	.435	18.9
Role Conflict	.0475	.442	19.6
Career Dissatisfaction	-.0621	.448	20.0
Interpersonal Trust	.6432	.452	20.4

III. Attitudes Toward Unions for Professionals

Age	-.1865	.165	2.7
Seniority	-.3118	.207	4.3
Interpersonal Trust	-.6264	.218	4.8
Career Dissatisfaction	-.0695	.227	5.2
Job Tension	.1285	.238	5.7

IV. Attitudes Toward Professional Associations

Age	.7362	.560	31.3
Career Dissatisfaction	.0975	.573	32.8
Seniority	-.2653	.581	33.8
Organizational Commitment	-.4240	.585	34.2

(n=901)

* All data reported in table significant at .01 level.
** Variables included in regression all analysis: Age, Seniority, Career Dissatisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Interpersonal Trust, Job Tension, Perceived Role Conflict, Professional Commitment.

FOOTNOTES

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